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Written Testimony before the Aging Services Committee

Elizabeth B. Ritter on behalf of the State Department on Aging

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Senator Flexer, Representative Serra, Senator Kelly, Representative Bolinsky and distinguished members of the Aging Committee. My name is Betsy Ritter. I am the Acting Commissioner of the State Department on Aging. I am here today to offer testimony regarding SB 716: AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESPITE CARE PROGRAM.

The State Department on Aging oversees the Connecticut Statewide Respite Care Program which provides relief to caregivers with a loved one with Alzheimer's disease. Public Act 09-75 requires annual adjustments to the eligibility parameters to reflect Social Security cost-of-living adjustments. These adjustments result in expanded eligibility for the program each year. Effective July 1, 2015, the income limit will be \$44,591 and the asset limit will be \$118,549.

Since this is a respite program which cannot provide long-term services to clients, it is utilized by younger adults who may not qualify for any other program, such as the Connecticut Homecare Program for Elders (CHCPE) or low income older adults who are in urgent need of services while awaiting eligibility for the CHCPE and/or Medicaid. There is a co-pay requirement for the respite program but waivers may be granted to qualifying individuals. In fact, in FY 14, 46% of the program participants were granted co-pay waivers due to minimal financial resources. If program eligibility is increased without an additional appropriation, it is our concern that this would likely reduce the amount of funds available to serve those low income clients who have limited resources and are the greatest users of this program and most in need. Since there is not anticipated to be any additional appropriations to this program in the Governor's budget, we cannot support this proposal at this time.

This program has incredible value to caretakers working hard to keep their family members in their homes through some of their most difficult times. However, in the absence of additional appropriations, the impact of increasing the eligibility limit could effectively reduce its effectiveness in helping those most in need of respite.

Thank you for your attention and support for our Alzheimer's Disease Respite Care Program. I am looking forward to continuing to work with you as we search for ways to help families deal with this terrible disease.

